

where the statute of limitations is 3 years. In deciding a claim, a determination must be made as to whether the cause or basis of the claim was the result of a willful violation on the part of the agency.

(c) *Preserving the claim period.* A claimant or a claimant's designated representative may preserve the claim period by submitting a written claim either to the agency employing the claimant during the claim period or to OPM. The date the agency or OPM receives the claim is the date that determines the period of possible entitlement to back pay. The claimant is responsible for proving when the claim was received by the agency or OPM and for retaining documentation to establish when the claim was received by the agency or OPM, such as by filing the claim using certified, return receipt mail, or by requesting that the agency or OPM provide written acknowledgment of receipt of the claim. If a claim for back pay is established, the claimant will be entitled to pay for a period of up to 2 years (3 years for a willful violation) back from the date the claim was received.

#### § 551.703 Avenues of review.

(a) *Negotiated grievance procedure (NGP) as exclusive administrative remedy.* If at any time during the claim period, a claimant was a member of a bargaining unit covered by a collective bargaining agreement that did not specifically exclude matters under the Act from the scope of the NGP, the claimant must use that NGP as the exclusive administrative remedy for all claims under the Act. There is no right to further administrative review by the agency or by OPM. The remaining sections in this subpart (that is, §§ 551.704 through 551.710) do not apply to such employees.

(b) *Non-NGP administrative review by agency or OPM.* A claimant may file a claim with the agency employing the claimant during the claim period or with OPM, but not both simultaneously, regarding matters arising under the Act if, during the entire claim period, the claimant:

(1) Was not a member of a bargaining unit, or

(2) Was a member of a bargaining unit not covered by a collective bargaining agreement, or

(3) Was a member of a bargaining unit covered by a collective bargaining agreement that specifically excluded matters under the Act from the scope of the NGP.

(c) *Judicial review.* Nothing in this subpart limits the right of a claimant to bring an action in an appropriate United States court. Filing a claim with an agency or with OPM does not satisfy the statute of limitations governing FLSA claims filed in court. OPM will not decide an FLSA claim that is in litigation.

#### § 551.704 Claimant's representative.

A claimant may designate a representative to assist in preparing or presenting a claim. The claimant must designate the representative in writing. A representative may not participate in OPM interviews unless specifically requested to do so by OPM. An agency may disallow a claimant's representative who is a Federal employee in any of the following circumstances:

(a) When the individual's activities as a representative would cause a conflict of interest or position;

(b) When the designated representative cannot be released from his or her official duties because of the priority needs of the Government; or

(c) When the release of the designated representative would give rise to unreasonable costs to the Government.

#### § 551.705 Filing an FLSA claim.

(a) *Filing an FLSA claim.* A claimant may file an FLSA claim with either the agency employing the claimant during the claim period or with OPM, but a claimant cannot pursue the same claim with both at the same time. OPM encourages a claimant to obtain a decision on the claim from the agency before filing the claim with OPM. However, this is a matter of personal discretion and a claimant is not required to do this; a claimant may use either avenue. A claimant who receives an unfavorable decision on a claim from the agency may still file the claim with OPM. However, a claimant may not file